

THE OWL CLUB



Founded 1894

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- Current Notice
- Back Notices
- Constitution (as amended 2021)
- In Memoriam 1894-2022
- List of Members as at 2023/03/01
- More

Committee 2023/2024

President: Geoffrey Ashmead
Senior Vice-President: Ron Duff
Junior Vice-President: Bill Coetzee
Secretary: Hugh Amoore
Treasurer: Richard Morris
Imm. Past President: Mike Bruton
Additional Members: Nigel Gwynne
Evans, Peter Hyslop, Mike James,
David Little, Paul Murray &
Peter Sutherland

Honorary Auditor:

Verwey Wiese

Dinner bookings

Email: secretary@owls.capetown
Telephone: 021 671 3121
Cellphone: 082 440 8204

Treasurer

Email: treasurer@owls.capetown
Telephone: 02 1 531 0435
Cellphone: 083 272 0500
Postal: 2 Park Lane, University Drive,
7405 Pinelands

Bank details

The Owl Club
Standard Bank of South Africa
A/c no. 071 818 006
Bank branch code: 051 001

This month's edition:

Editor: Ron Duff
Contributors: Hugh Amoore, Mike
James, David Little, Kate McCallum
& Vince van der Bijl
Caricatures: Tony Grogan
Photography: Bill Coetzee &
Ron Duff

*"No matter how tall the mountain is,
it cannot block the sun."
Chinese proverb*

NOTICE

Tuesday 16th May 2023 : Notice of meeting #1349

Dear Fellow Owls

THE 1349th MEETING OF THE OWL CLUB, PRECEDED BY DINNER, WILL BE HELD ON TUESDAY 16th MAY 2023, 6:00 PM FOR 6:45 PM START.
VENUE: THE GRILL ROOM, KELVIN GROVE CLUB, NEWLANDS.

Chairman: **President Owl Geoffrey Ashmead**

Guest speaker: **Patrick Woudt**

'The impact of the James Webb Space Telescope'

Professor Patrick Woudt is Head of Department: Astronomy at the University of Cape Town and he will be expounding on the impact that the *James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)* has had in the fields of astronomy and cosmology.

JWST is the largest optical telescope in space and, equipped with high-resolution and high-sensitivity instruments, it is currently conducting infrared astronomy which allows it to view objects too old, too distant or too faint to be detected by the *Hubble Space Telescope*.

Music: **Peter Martens & Elna van der Merwe**

Piano & cello duo

Owldom is privileged to be able to hear a performance from two of South Africa's finest musicians, Peter Martens on cello and Elna van der Merwe on piano. The duo will perform works by both Ludwig van Beethoven and Cape Town born composer, Hendrik Hofmeyr.

WPB: **Owl Richard Morris**

'The Spirit Of The Mountain : Jan Christian Smuts'

Fiscal Shrike Richard Morris will present this gem of an oration by former South African Prime Minister J.C. Smuts (1919 to 1924 and 1939 to 1948). Whenever he was in Cape Town and could slip away from his Parliamentary duties, General Smuts found inspiration by climbing Table Mountain. This speech was made when he unveiled the *Mountain Club of South Africa War Memorial* at Maclear's Beacon, Table Mountain, on Sunday 25th February 1923.

Dinner price: **R320**.

Dress: **Black tie (or similarly elegant attire)**.

RESERVATIONS & PAYMENTS:

Any Owl who does not have internet access is welcome to telephone the Secretary Bird at **082 440 8204** or **021 671 3121** to book a perch.

All other Owls are encouraged to use the **Pay'n'Perch** procedure by paying their dining fee into the Club's bank account by EFT and instructing the bank (using the option provided) to send a remittance confirmation email to secretary@owls.capetown whereupon their perches will be booked.

No further emails will be needed from you unless you have special dietary needs or if you are using a dining credit.

In all cases, bookings will close at 6:00 pm on Saturday 13th May 2023.

All bookings will be acknowledged.

The April 2023 meeting

A total of 54 Owls and 13 guests met for the 1348th meeting of **The Owl Club**, held in The Grill Room, Kelvin Grove Club, Newlands on Tuesday 18th April 2023..

The proceedings commenced at 18:45, with President Owl **Geoffrey Ashmead** welcoming all and inviting Owl **Nigel Franks** to deliver the *Grace*.

The dinner started with a broccoli and cauliflower soup served with blue cheese sauce, the main course was a roast sirloin of beef served with roast potatoes, seasoned vegetables and a mushroom sauce, followed by the dessert of peach and ginger mousse topped with a berry coulis. The meal was again accompanied by fine red and white wines from the *Hawksmoor* estate ... and filter coffee ended the repast.

The President then asked Owls and guests to charge their glasses and to rise for the *Toast To South Africa*, which then led into a short comfort break whilst the tables were cleared.

The 1348th meeting of **The Owl Club** commenced with the President congratulating those Owls celebrating birthdays during the month of April, viz: Owls **Geoff Davies** (82), **Bruce Dietrich** (80), **Leon de Wet** (67),



Vince van der Bijl

Perhaps less well known was that, after taking his degree at the University of Natal, Vince was a school teacher (again following in his father's footsteps) before playing county cricket in the UK where he was named as one of *Wisden's* five players of the year.

As the founder of *MasiSports*, he clearly explained much of how both

Grace

Lord, You are the Giver of all that is good. We thank You for the wonderful fellowship enjoyed through our Owl Club membership and we thank You for the splendid meal which is spread before us.

We acknowledge this food as a gift of Your love and as an invitation to bring our needs and our thanks to You.

Bless the food that You have given. Grant us the grace to receive it as an undeserved blessing from You, and to nourish our bodies thereby, that we may be able to serve You more.

In the name of Jesus.
Amen.

Quartet comprising **Nicholas Bruiners** (violin), **Kaitlin Visser Downie** (violin), **Micaela Arries** (viola) and **Ashlin Grobbelaar** (cello). The first part of their repertoire included delightful compositions from both Alexander Borodin and Ludwig van Beethoven.

A fifteen-minute bar interval then led on to the second half of the musical



Newly inducted Owls Michael Baker & Jonathan Horn (with Richard Morris) ..

Paul Murray (68), **Angel Tordesillas** (84), **Kit Vaughan** (70), **Neil Veitch** (77) and **John Webb** (81).

The President then invited two new Owls, viz: **Michael Baker** and **Jonathan Horn**, to the podium where they were ceremoniously inducted and welcomed into the fellowship and invited to dwell in harmony with their fellow Owls.

Then, whilst guests were requested to remain seated, the lights were dimmed and Owls were invited to please charge their glasses, to rise and to join in the *Toast To Our Guests*.

The guest speaker for the evening, was then introduced.

Vince van der Bijl may be the best (and if not the best, one of the best) medium fast bowlers never to play test cricket, his entire career spanning the years of South Africa's sporting isolation. Cricket must have been in his blood: his grandfather, great uncle, and father all played 1st class cricket for Western Province (as amateurs).



.. with President Owl Geoffrey Ashmead wielding the ceremonial mace

cricket and teaching have combined to form the highly successful *MasiSports* concept (but more of this later).

The *Chorister Robin*, Owl **David Little** was invited to introduce the music performers for the evening, the *Kirby*



Owl Kate McCallum

programme where those assembled were treated to further enjoyable compositions from both Alexander Borodin and Dmitri Shostakovich.

Owl **Kate McCallum** was invited to fill the *Waste Paper Basket* with her fascinating tale of a 'treasure hunt' (being an account of the exciting search for Thomas Bain's *Sketch Book of Rock Paintings*; as well as the search for the copies of rock paintings he donated to the *SA Public Library*; the search for the actual sites he painted and the role played by **The Owl Club**..



The Kirby Quartet.
The Kirby Quartet

Guest speaker: Vince van der Bijl MasiSports

Vince van der Bijl definitely needed no introduction to **The Owl Club**. He was one of the best bowlers to not ever play test cricket, his entire career spanning the years of South Africa's sporting isolation.

Vince (founder and MD of MasiSports) focussed his presentation on the model that they have developed to enable schools to provide a holistic education, so lacking in South Africa.

In Vince's own words ...

"It is the trilogy of sport, life-skills and education that can lead Masiphumelele's learners to a life truly fulfilled. This is our purpose."

"In August 2017, I founded the MCC Masi sports project in Masiphumelele (which lies between Kommetjie and Fish Hoek) with start-up capital generously donated by UK-based MCC (Marylebone Cricket Club). The project has subsequently been renamed 'MasiSports'."

"Our purpose is to enable a holistic education of academics, sport and life skills in the Masiphumelele Schools for the upliftment of the learners, their families and the community."

"In 2016, the school had one netball court, one short sprint track, one coach and did not play in any official school leagues save netball. There was absolutely no life-skills training."

"Today they have 19 teams in seven sports, all in school branded kit, playing in the official schools' leagues. Each team has their own coach. Chess and hip-hop dance were introduced in 2020."

"At Ukhanyo Primary School, three artificial cricket nets and two 40m x 29m AstroTurf fields were constructed by 2019. A 60m x 30m AstroTurf field for rugby (with shockpad), soccer and cricket matches was completed in August 2021. In 2020, two netball courts were constructed at Masiphumelele High School."

"The schools hold a 20-minute life-skills session at the start of every sports session."

"This training is focussed on respect, team behaviour, avoidance of gender-based violence and social cohesion."

"To date, three other schools have replicated this holistic model."

The remainder of Vince van der Bijl's presentation can best be summed-up by the views of British politician **Peter Hain** who



Vince van der Bijl

recently visited Masiphumelele Primary School, and acknowledged the good work being done by MasiSports.

"I find this inspirational. I've got grandchildren of this sort of age. Girls who play soccer and boys who play soccer. The way it develops the personality ... kids grow up to really understand what life is about. They become team players, become competitive, become more skilled, gain more confidence," said Hain.

MasiSports offers cricket, rugby, netball, soccer, athletics, chess, cycling and basketball to the learners. They have also built AstroTurf fields and contributed equipment and sports clothing to the primary school children. There are coaches and teachers at the fields every day to help the children improve and excel at their chosen sport.

"If this can really take root and facilities like this AstroTurf field – which is unusual in this sort of area – can spread around the country, it would have a transformative effect. Not just regarding inter-school competitiveness and South Africa's sporting ability, but also in improved overall academic performance," said Peter Hain.

"What's most interesting to me about this visit is the way they link the classroom to the sports field. How what you learn in the classroom is what you enhance on the sports field and the other way around. It builds up the individual pupil to be a much better and able person."

Retired South African cricketer Vincent van der Bijl started the programme in 2017, and celebrated the fifth anniversary of MasiSports in August 2022.

Private investors – secured mostly through Vince van der Bijl's extensive contact list – contributed to help build the facilities, including the AstroTurf fields.

"I was retired and I wanted to do something meaningful. I was called in to start a cricket programme, and when I got there, I saw the potential of Masiphumelele," Vince van der Bijl revealed..

"When I saw this vast open space, I thought I could change that in creating opportunities through facilities as well as developing a coaching unit. That's how it started."

Van der Bijl, whose role at MasiSports is mainly behind the scenes, has extended the programme beyond the sports field.

"The model is about holistic education. Life skills training for the kids and staff, coaching the coaches for sport and arts and culture, and linking with education. We think those are the key things to linking generational change," said van der Bijl.

"I help with the coaching when required, but we have very experienced coaches. We're moving to the high school in a big way – Masi High School – soon. We've installed two netball courts there and they already have coaches and branded kit and equipment."

MasiSports is currently working with a number of schools around South Africa to help develop similar programmes. Vince van der Bijl said that *"94% of schools (in South Africa) do not have sports. Only 1,350 schools have sports after school, out*



MasiSports AstroTurf sports field Masiphumelele

of a total of 25,000 schools. I believe physical education and sport – with all the other extramural activities – are crucial for a child's development.

“Our big dream, in the South Peninsula, is to develop a rainbow nation as per Nelson Mandela and Bishop Desmond Tutu, and use primary schools to achieve that.”

Hain said he believed the South African government could do a lot more for children around the country.

“I want to see that the money taxpayers put into schools in South Africa is spent in the classroom and on the sports field, and not wasted or lost to corruption.

“The education ministers at all levels should learn from projects like this.

This is a very small but crucially important example of what needs to be replicated right around the country.

“If you did this right, South Africa's sporting prowess would jump massively,” Hain added.

“This is a very sporting country, but its full potential is not being realised – and yet it could, with projects like this.”

(The above interview with Peter Hain is reproduced with acknowledgement to Keanan Hemmonsbey / Daily Maverick).

The importance of what Vince van der Bijl and the dedicated MasiSports team are accomplishing at Masiphumelele (and beyond) was not wasted upon his Owl Club audience.



Cricket coach Vince van der Bijl

Musical notes: The Kirby Quartet

Nicholas Bruiners, Kaitlin Visser Downie, Micaela Arries & Ashlin Grobbelaar

The Kirby Quartet was formed in 2022, with members **Nicholas Bruiners** (violin 1), **Kaitlin Visser Downie** (violin 2), **Micaela Arries** (viola) and **Ashlin Grobbelaar** (cello). All four members study at the South African College of Music, UCT.

The Quartet is named after the Kirby Collection, a room in the South African College of Music housing over 600 African, European and Asian instruments, as well as sound recordings, field notes, photographs, correspondence and more.

In September 2022, they placed as a runner up in the Stellenbosch University National Ensembles Competition.

In October 2022, they won the 15th Annual Schock Prize for Chamber Music with their performance of Shostakovich's *String Quartet No. 3, Op.73 in F Major*.

They were also presented as the Cape Chamber Music Collective's 8th project with pianist **Gerhard Joubert** and performed five concerts in Cape Town and Stellenbosch, which included a performance at *Spier Wine Estate's Jazz and Classical Encounters*. Other venues they have performed at include *Oude Nectar, No. 6 Spin Street, Erin Hall* and *Casa Labia*.

The Kirby Quartet opened the first part of their evening's performance with:

Alexander Borodin (1833 - 1887):



Alexander Borodin



Ludwig van Beethoven



Dmitri Shostakovich



The Kirby Quartet
Nicholas Bruiners, Kaitlin Visser Downie, Micaela Arries & Ashlin Grobbelaar

String Quartet No. 2 in D Major

1st movement - “Allegro Moderato”

2nd movement - “Scherzo”

This string quartet was composed fairly quickly in 1881 while Borodin was staying at the estate of his friend, and fellow composer Nikolai Lodyzhensky. It was dedicated to his wife Ekaterina Protopova. Some scholars, such as Borodin's biographer Serge Dianin, suggest that the quartet was a 20th anniversary gift and that it has a program evoking the couple's first meeting in Heidelberg.

Borodin was followed by:

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827):

String Quartet Op.18 no.4 in C Minor

3rd movement - “Menuetto”

This quartet was composed between 1798 and 1800 in Vienna. The Op. 18 collection is sometimes difficult to study historically because the manuscripts no longer exist and much about them is conjecture or guesses. The fourth quartet is unique in the set in that there is no evidence that sketches or drafts of this quartet can be found.

After a welcome 15-minute bar break, the quartet reverted to:

Alexander Borodin (1833 - 1887):

String Quartet No. 2 in D Major

3rd movement - “Notturmo” (Andante)

4th movement - “Finale” (Andante -

Vivace).

And Borodin was followed (this time) by:

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975):

String Quartet No. 3 in F Major Op. 73

3rd movement: “Forces of War

Unleashed” (Allegro non troppo)

This quartet was composed in 1946. It was dedicated to the *Beethoven Quartet* who premiered it in Moscow in 1946,

WPB: Owl Kate McCallum Treasure hunt

(being an account of the exciting search for Thomas Bain's Sketchbook of Rock Paintings; as well as an account of the search for the copies of rock paintings he donated to the SA Public Library; and finally being an account of the role of the illustrious Owl Club in the hunt)

South African Archaeological Society and eCRAG member, Owl **Kate McCallum**, was idly reading *A Colossus Of Roads* (by Patricia Storrar and Gunther Komnick), the 1984 illustrated biography of **Thomas Bain** (the South African road builder, not the artist), when she came across a chapter on his interest in rock paintings, and the fact that he carried a sketchbook with him in which to copy rock paintings whenever he surveyed a potential route for a new mountain pass.

Thomas Charles John Bain was responsible for the building of 24 mountain passes in South Africa including (in order of construction): *Meiring's Poort, Grey's Pass, Tulbagh Kloof, Seweweekspoort, Prince Alfred's Pass, Seven Passes Road, Robinson Pass, Tradouw Pass, Garcia's Pass, Pakhuis Pass, Koo (Burger's) Pass, Rooihoogte Pass, Verlaten Kloof, Cogman's Kloof, Swartberg Pass, Schoemanskloof, Baviaanskloof, Bloukrans Pass, Grootrivier Pass* and *Storms River Pass*.

Owl **Kate McCallum** asked both **Janette Deacon** and **Nic Wiltshire**, fellow *Archsoc* and *eCRAG* members, if they had ever seen this sketchbook, or if they were aware that **Richard 'Ginger' Townley-Johnson** had known about it and had written an article about it (in *The Lantern*, 1967) entitled: '*Thomas Bain: His priceless little drawing-book of rock-paintings redrawn*'.



Thomas Bain



Thomas Bain (in 1878) had also donated 38 paintings to the South African Public Library.

Neither Deacon nor Wiltshire had heard of the sketchbook nor the paintings.

All three were excited with the prospect of discovering more about all of this.

And so the treasure hunt began.

Owl Kate started the treasure hunt by searching through the *Bain Collection* of papers held in the UCT Libraries, but none of the sought-after items were held there. She suspected that the sketchbook might still be in the possession of the descendants of Thomas Bain.

In the meantime, a series of chances encounters intervened.

By joining **The Owl Club** in November 2021, she met the late Owl **Anthony Storr Lister** and, upon learning that he was a descendent of **Andrew Geddes Bain** and **Thomas Bain**, she decided to email him in connection with her quest. She was most delighted when he replied and confirmed that, indeed, he had the sketchbook at home, stored somewhere amongst many other boxes. After promising to let Kate know when he had unearthed the sketchbook, Anthony did eventually call back and they subsequently met-up two weeks later.

And so the first 'treasure hunt' discovery was a great success.

Upon paging through the sketchbook, *South African Archaeological Society* members Janette Deacon and Nic Wiltshire immediately identified two of the images as

being from the *Sevilla Rock Art Trail* (Cederberg, Western Cape) but they did not recognise any of the others, despite Janette's going through all her reference books.

There was still no record of the (missing) 38 paintings that Bain had donated, but an email of enquiry soon went off to *Iziko* (the *South African Museum*).

The next day there was a welcome email reply, from *Iziko*, in Kate's mailbox, confirming that they had eight copies of rock paintings by Thomas Bain, as well as hundreds of unidentified paintings labelled '*Historical recordings*' which were still waiting to be unpacked from boxes.

Suspecting that the paintings were full watercolour renderings of the ones in Bain's sketchbook, Kate sent her photographs of the sketchbook pages off to *Iziko* (in order to see whether they were a match).

Iziko immediately confirmed that their paintings were the same as those in the sketchbook. To date, eight paintings have been found (and identified) and there are 30 more to be discovered (most likely still hidden in the unpacked boxes at *Iziko*).

The results of the 'treasure hunt' were declared a great success (although the exact locations of many of the rock paintings recorded by Thomas Bain's sketches still need to be identified).

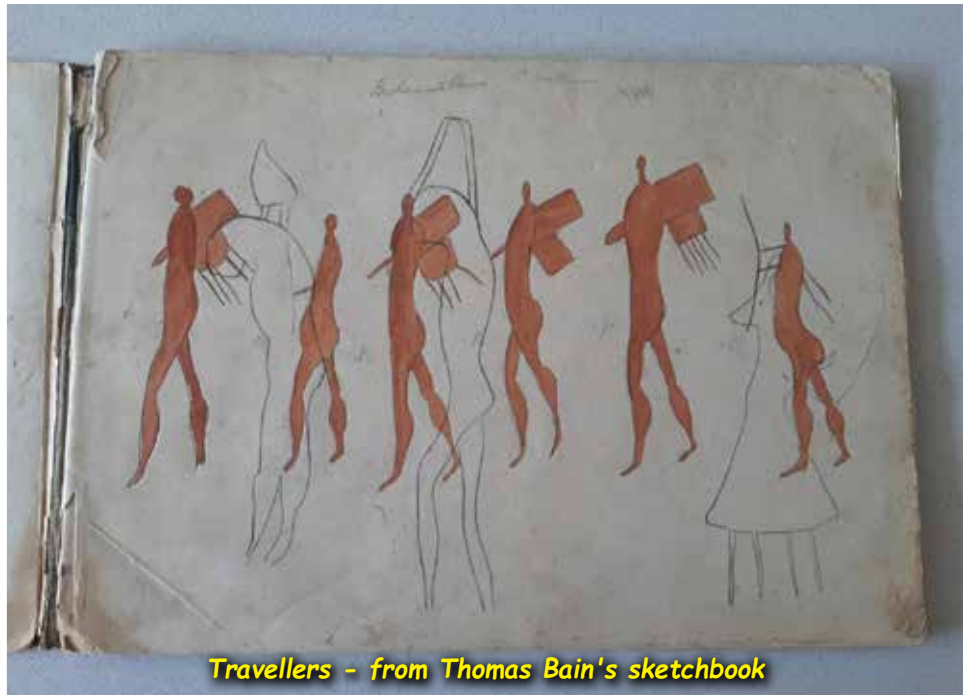
Likewise, the cataloging of those Bain paintings still securely held by *Iziko* will prove to be an interesting exercise,



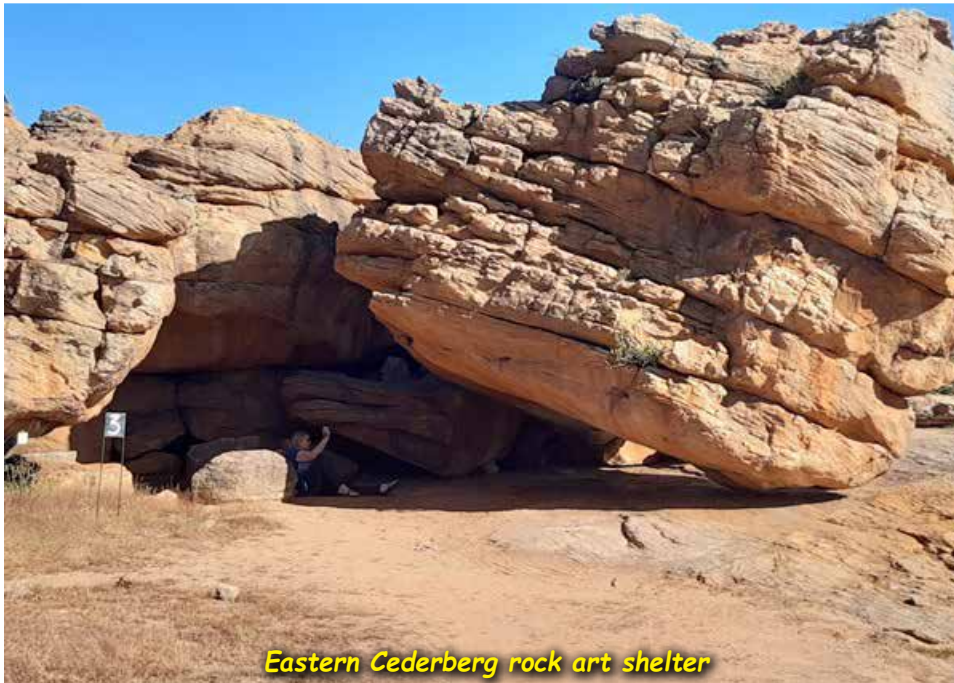
Late Owl Anthony Storr Lister with Thomas Bain's sketchbook



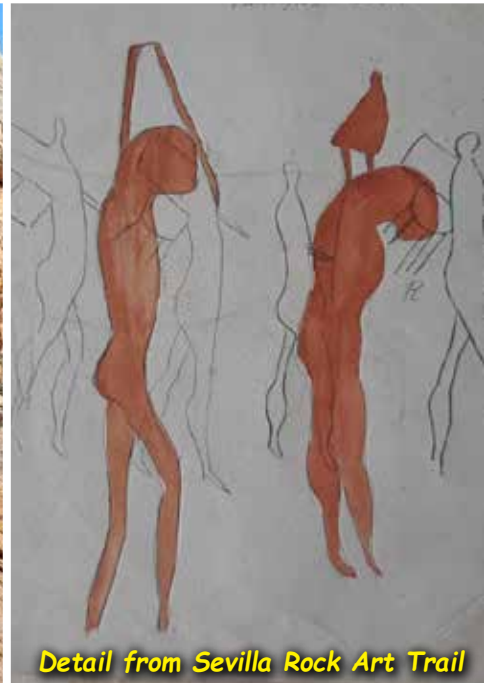
Detail from Mertenhof rock art



Travellers - from Thomas Bain's sketchbook



Eastern Cederberg rock art shelter



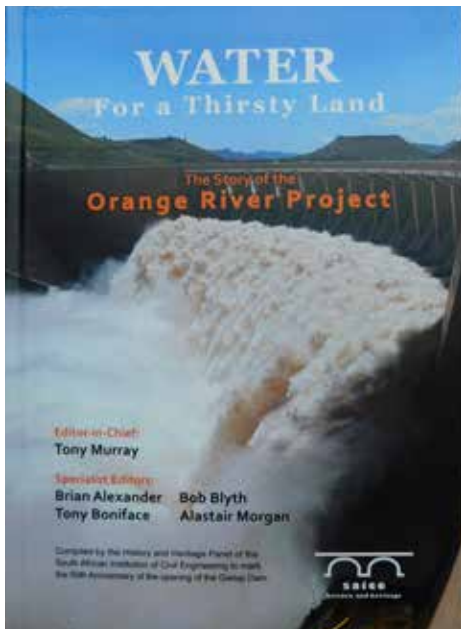
Detail from Sevilla Rock Art Trail



Detail from Sevilla Rock Art Trail



Sevilla Rock Art Trail, Site 3 - Traveller's Rest



Water For A Thirsty Land The story of the Orange River Project

A new book, 'Water for a Thirsty Land. The Story of the Orange River Project', was recently commissioned by the *South African Institution of Civil Engineering*, and compiled by their *Heritage Panel* to mark the 60th anniversary of the announcement of the *Orange River Project* and the 50th anniversary of the opening of the first phase of the project, the *Gariiep Dam*.

Past President Owl **Mike Bruton** was invited by publisher Owl **David Hilton Barber** (founder and CEO of *Footprint Press*) to handle the launch of this new book.

In the short biographical notes on the editor-in-chief of the book, Owl **Tony Murray**, it recognises him as a past

President and Honorary Life Member of **The Owl Club** of Cape Town.

Interestingly, two of the four specialist editors of the book, **Tony Boniface** and **Bob Blyth**, are also Owls, and the book has been printed by *Creda Press*, a company established by Owl **Dennis Nick**.

The special guest of the evening was retired Supreme Court of Appeal Judge, Owl **Ian Farlam**, who was both recognised as, and lauded as, an invaluable source of information and reference to the authors of the book. Ian Farlam was also invited to address the audience that evening.

No wonder this interesting book is so full of Owlsh wisdom!

The Owl Club Colloquia

All Owls should please note that the first **Colloquium** of **The Owl Club** will take place in the **Palmyra Room** at **Kelvin Grove Club** at **09h30 for 10h00 on Wednesday, 14th June 2023**.

The event will last for two hours and Owls are free to enjoy lunch in the Terrace Restaurant afterwards (at their own expense).

A R50 fee, payable in cash at the door, will be charged for a tea and coffee service.

The theme of the first **Colloquium** will be 'Is the post-Covid balance sheet positive or negative?'

A series of short talks will be given by several Owls on the impacts of the Covid pandemic, both positive and negative, on meetings, conferences, commerce, the medical profession, formal and informal education, music and the performing arts, and the environment, followed by focussed discussion and debate.

Guests are welcome.

Owls are encouraged to support this important initiative.

Remember the date.

The first Colloquium will be held, at Kelvin Grove Club, on Wednesday 14th June at 9.30 for 10.00 am.



Members' News

COLLOQUIA

The AGM in March gave the Committee the green light to arrange Colloquia. A detailed notice will follow in due course, outlining the subject of this first colloquium, but Owls may wish to diarise the date ...: Wednesday 14th June at 9:30 for 10:00.

.oOo.

DINNER & MEETING BOOKINGS

The Notice advises Owls (as does this edition) wishing to dine or join meetings post-prandially to book their perch by 18:00 on the Saturday before the Tuesday meeting. This allows time to plan the seating, to give Kelvin notice of numbers for catering purposes, and to provide notes for the President. The Secretary generally uses his discretion when the odd Owl seeks to make a late booking and almost invariably is able to do so. Nonetheless, the Secretary urges Owls to book in good time.

When Owls are unable to take their booked perches, and cancel, and where this cancellation is made in time for the Secretary to alert Kelvin, the dinner booking with

Kelvin is cancelled and any payment already made is held in credit for the member. But if the cancellation is too late to cancel the Kelvin booking the dinner fee is lost unless the perch can be assigned to an Owl who arrives unheralded seeking a meal, in which case he or she takes the perch of the Owl who cancelled late, and eats his or her meal; in such cases the Owl who was obliged to cancel gets a credit.

.oOo.

OWLISH?

The odd Owl and perhaps a guest or two have been observed using mobile phones during meetings. The Secretary suggests that this is not Owlsh, and that unless a call or text is an emergency should wait for the break (or leave the room to take the call).

.oOo.

NEW MEMBERS

The Committee is pleased to be able to report that 2 new Owls, **Jonathan Horn** and **Michael Baker**, were inducted at the 18th April meeting.

.oOo.

Owl Peter Hyslop: Seen & noted @ the April meeting



Attentive Owls listening to Vince van der Bijl



Owl Jimmy Baigrie



Kaitlin Visser Downie & Micaela Arries



Ashlin Grobbelaar & Nicholas Bruiners

Seen & noted @ the April meeting



Owl Bruce Dietrich



Owl Owen Kinahan



Micaela Arries



Owl John Hund



Owl Christopher Gregorowski



Kaitlin Visser Downie



Owl Geoffrey Ashmead



Owl Paul Murray



Owl Richard Morris



Ian Campbell



Owl Kate McCallum



Vince van der Bijl